2.

SUBJECTION FOR Conſcience-ſake

Aſſerted in a

SERMON

Preached at the

ASSIZES

Held at

ANT-HILL in *BEDFORDSHIRE.*
March the 11th. 168⅘.

Printed at the earneſt Requeſt of the Right Honourable the *Judges*, the Right Worſhipfull the *Sheriff*, and the reſt of the *Juſtices of the Peace* for the ſaid County.

By *Tho. Pomfret*, *A. M.* Vicar of *Luton* in *Bedfordſhire*, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable *ROBERT* EARL of *AILESBURY*.

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March the 11th 1683.

Printed at the earnest Request of the Right Honourable the *Judges*, the Right Worshipful the *Sheriff*, and the [illegible] of the *Justices of the Peace* for the [illegible]

By *The Pensioner of M.* [illegible] and Chaplain to the [illegible] Earl of [illegible]

TO THE

RIGHT WORSHIPFULL

George Abbot, Esq;

High Sheriff of the

COUNTY

OF

BEDFORD.

SIR,

I *Did not expect, when by your* Command *I had preach'd this Sermon of Obedience from the* Pulpit, *to have had the Point of my own* Arguments *turn'd so far upon my self as to be oblig'd also to send it to the* Press, *in perfect Submission to your* Authority, *and*

my own Doctrins. *But I was loath to enter a* Proteſtation *againſt my ſelf, and be the* firſt *that ſhould reſiſt a Perſon ſo much* above *me, and that ought to have an* abſolute *Power over me, having paſſd ſuch great* obligations *upon me. I ſhall not be ſo unreaſonable, as to beſeech you to* protect *what you have been pleaſ'd to* bring forth; *nor indeed am I much ſolicitous what* fortune *I meet with, being ſatisfied, that no man can hinder me from acquiring that* end *I propounded in the Pub'ication, which was onely to teſtifie* what defe-rence I bear to your Commands, *and that by a more ſolemn notice, I might declare how much I am,*

SIR,

Your moſt humble Servant,

THO. POMFRET.

ROMANS XIII. 5.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not onely for wrath, but also for conscience-sake.

THE Purity of our Religion, and the Excellency of our Government, together with the apparent reasonableness and utility, both of our Civil and Ecclesiastical Laws, are so visible to any Subject, who shall consider them with an humble and honest mind, that one would think the supreme Power should receive no farther trouble after the preparing such wise and wholesome constitutions.

But then; if to the goodness and wisdome of our Governours in prescribing such usefull and equal measures; we consider that they are inthron'd by God's appointment, and govern by his Power; their commands receive from thence, all that force and veneration that Religion

can poſſibly adde; becauſe not onely the fear of the Prince, but of God too becomes their Sanction. *You muſt needs be ſubject, not onely for wrath, but alſo for Conſcience-ſake.* In a Chriſtian Commonwealth therefore, where it can but rarely (if at all) happen that we muſt diſobey the Laws of Princes in obedience to the Laws of God, it is the oddeſt thing in all the world to hear men pretending Conſcience againſt their Duty; and think to ſatisfie the Law by grievous out-cries and ſeditious Pamphlets, teaching the Magiſtrate how he ſhould govern, when he is directing them how they ſhould obey; not conſidering that it is more like Chriſtians to doe their duty, and obey the Laws, rather than to be full of talk and argument to create ſcruples, and fill the heads of their followers with objections againſt them. Thus mens minds are perplex't, and the Government is diſturb'd, and *Conſcience* which is the greateſt *Obligation* in all the world to obedience, as it is order'd, is made the greateſt *Objection*. For you muſt *obey for Conſcience-ſake*, ſays St. *Paul*; but if you have any Conſci-

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ence, you must *not obey*, for say our *new Apostles*. To determine therefore this great Case I shall indeavour three things.

I. To settle obedience to humane Laws upon the two sanctions of the Text, the fear of *Wrath*, and the obligation of *Conscience*.

II. I shall give what answer I am able, to some of those objections which are usually offer'd to deliver the *Conscience* from that *Obligation*.

III. I shall consider *measures of Conscience* how far it ought to be admitted.

I. Our first undertaking must be, *to settle obedience to the Laws, upon the proper Sanctions of it*, mention'd in the Text, *the fear of wrath*, and the *obligation of Conscience*. The one is man's, the other is God's. Fear of wrath is that band of Obedience which humane Power adds to the Law. For though there is a baseness in disobedience, which all good men hate, and all wise men condemn; because it is an enemy to order and de-

structure of peace, and Society: Yet this being not strong enough to oblige of it self, because some people lay aside all natural goodness and justice; therefore to all Laws it is necessary there should be a punishment annex'd, the fear of which, is to restrain men from doing against the Law.

I must confess those men are no very good Subjects, who obey onely to avoid the penalty; therefore it is made the character of a base disposition to forbear transgressing, onely out of a slavish apprehension of the consequent evil: but St. *Paul* said, that the Law, that is, the threatning was made, not for the righteous, but for the wicked. For so long as men lov'd goodness, and took delight in doing well, and had no designs against common honesty and justice, there was no need to forbid any thing upon the account of fear, for a good man will abstain from all unrighteous practices, though there were no penal Laws in a Common-wealth. But then some men having ras'd out all natural Principles; Governments were forc'd to superinduce

the dread of puniſhment; not that the Laws intended to doe any evil, but that *Princes* themſelves and their *Subjects*, ſhould not ſuffer any evil by the diſobedient and unjuſt. For that by fear the malice of ill men be reſtrain'd, and miſchief prevented to communities, is the end of all penal Laws, and the purpoſe of authority. So that wicked men making penal Laws neceſſary, they are juſt too, upon the ſame account; becauſe without compulſion it is no Law, and without Law there could be no ſociety, men having laid aſide all ingenuity and goodneſs, and would be herds of Wolves and Tygers but for a power above them.

I need not therefore ſpend time, to prove either that the Magiſtrate has a power to make Laws penal, or that it is lawfull to execute them when made; St. *Paul* having determin'd both theſe caſes in this Chapter of the Text moſt clearly: For having firſt reſolv'd Magiſtracy to be the ordinance of God; he then affirms the ſupreme Power to have a ſword in his hand, which he does not bear in vain; but it is in vain if the Prince can make no

Laws

Laws to reſtrain, or has no power to puniſh evil: and therefore he adds, becauſe of that power of puniſhing, he that tranſgreſſes the Law, which he calls doing evil, ought alſo to fear. And of himſelf when he was accuſed of a capital crime, he declares, that if he had done *any thing worthy of death* he refus'd not to die, he never queſtion'd the power, nor ſpake evil of the Government, but onely proteſted his innocency.

This being evident, I ſhall leave it to ſtand by its own ſtrength; and ſhall rather indeavour to remove a great miſtake taken up by our tranſgreſſors of the Laws, which is this; they think, though they break the Law, yet if when they cannot avoid it, they *undergo the puniſhment*, they reckon themſelves people of a very good conſcience, though they remain in the tranſgreſſion. Now this conceit I the rather ſhall inquire into, becauſe it ſeems to be directly oppoſite to the Text, requiring Obedience *not onely for wrath, but alſo for Conſcience-ſake.* I ſhall take leave therefore to aſſert that the tranſgreſſors of the Law, though they have indur'd the puniſhment

niſhment, yet are not diſcharg'd in Conſcience, until they repent alſo the tranſgreſſion. And this I preſume will be evident if we conſider but two things; the Nature of the Laws which are broke; and the Rule of the Text for their obſervation.

Firſt, If we turn to the Laws themſelves, they are not Laws purely penal; but ſuch are call'd mixt penal Laws; that is, when with the duty commanded, there is a penalty annexed upon the not performing of it. As to inſtance in one for all; there is a Law requiring all perſons to hear divine ſervice every Lord's day, which beſides that it is a duty of Religion, is requir'd to be perform'd of every Subject under ſuch a penalty. Now here the intention of the Law is, that all people doe their duty, and it is not ſatisfied in its deſign, unleſs the duty be perform'd; for the Law makes no conditions for diſobedience, that you may ſtay at home, ſo you pay your money; nor is the penalty added to make the Subject poorer, but better; and for fear to keep him in obedience. So that he who tranſgreſſes the Law is puniſh'd for doing evil,

and

and for the ſame reaſon, even after enduring the puniſhment, he is bound to repent and doe ſo no more; becauſe every breach of a Good Law is a Sin againſt God, and that is not to be bought off with money; nor is the offence taken away in the Court of Conſcience, by exchanging it into a Shilling.

Secondly, We are to conſider the Rule of the Text, in which it is ſaid we are to *obey not onely for* fear of *wrath, but alſo for Conſcience-ſake.* But therefore if ſuffering the puniſhment did ſatisfie the Law, how can we be ſaid to be bound to obedience by the tyes of Conſcience? But if that be oblig'd, then the offender can never be diſcharg'd but by repenting of the crime, and obeying the Law; for no man's Conſcience can be ſet right but by returning to his duty. And that this may be the better underſtood, I ſhall repreſent to you humane Laws with that Sanction which God has added, and ſhow you we are to obey for Conſcience-ſake.

This appears *firſt*; becauſe the Power by which the Prince makes Laws is given him from God. There is no power but

but from him, *the powers that be are ordained of God*, Rom. XIII. 1. It is all one who commands, God or the King, for it is the power of God in the Prince: The original Authority of making Laws, to direct our Manners and Religion is in God; but then becauſe he ſpeaks unto us not always by himſelf, but ſometimes by the Magiſtrate, who has a power derived from him, we are to receive it as ſpake by God himſelf; and as to obedience, it is as obliging if he commands by Proxie, as if he ſpake in perſon. The way of delivering Laws makes no difference; the power is here onely to be conſider'd: and it being by God's authority the Prince conſtitutes, for that reaſon we are bound to obedience. So that though the ſupreme power of making Laws binding the Conſcience is in God, yet ſince he has inſtated the Magiſtrate with this power, it is binding upon the account of its derivation, becauſe it is God's power in his Miniſter.

This will be the more apparent if we adde to it in the *ſecond place*, that the power of puniſhing in the Magiſtrate is

from God. *Vengeance is mine*, ſays God, and when the ſupreme power puniſhes, he is but the Avenger of God's wrath, ſaid St. *Paul.* This is it which our holy Lord confirmed when he ſaid unto *Pilate, thou couldſt have no power unleſs it were given thee from above.* Therefore we muſt attend the conſequence. If God puniſhes when the Magiſtrate executes, it will follow alſo, that he is offended when the Law is broke; and that every tranſgreſſion of an humane ordinance is a violation of our Duty to God: he is the perſon firſt injur'd, and puts accordingly a Sword into the Magiſtrate's hand to revenge it upon the Criminal. For where there is an offence againſt God, as there is in the breach of all juſt Laws, there the Conſcience is concern'd; the one is the demonſtration of the other. This is the reaſon that St. *Peter* eſtabliſhes Subjection upon that intereſt which God himſelf has in the duty, *Obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake.* It is as neceſſary, and as pious, has in it the ſame reaſon, and the ſame religion, it is bound upon us with the ſame excellency, and the ſame rewards;

1 *Pet.* 2. 13.

wards; nay and diſobedience to humane commands, is threatned with the ſame puniſhment as to the Laws of God; *they that reſiſt ſhall find to themſelves damnation.* Rom. 13. 2.

This therefore I find conſented to by moſt, that the Magiſtrate has the power of puniſhing; onely ſome are pleas'd to grant it with this reſtriction; that it is onely for the breach of ſuch Laws, that either in words, or ſenſe, are contain'd in the Divine Commandments. For they ſuppoſe the Prince to be incompetent to make any Laws at all in indifferent things, ſuch as God has left wholly uncommanded; which opinion, the ill conſequences from it, will be ſufficient to overthrow. For this in the *firſt place* takes away the whole power of Princes. *Secondly*, it makes their care and their prudence almoſt uſeleſs; if no new proviſions can be made for new neceſſities, if no reſpect muſt be had to times and places, to cuſtoms and opinions; but all people muſt be govern'd alike, without any conſideration to the expediency or uſefulneſs of things. And *laſtly*, no Governments ſhall have any power to preſcribe rules of or-

der to their people, but they may live at random and in confuſion; and all parties that pretend Scripture for their rule, ſhall ſet up for themſelves, and make their humours (which they call their Conſciences) to be the Standard both of the Prince's power, and of their own duty. Which conſequences becauſe they are not to be indur'd, we muſt give to every Common-wealth its own juſt power, to govern their own concerns by what meaſures they themſelves think fitteſt. This all Communities and Churches do require and practiſe. And indeed though at the firſt, it had been no great matter whether ſome Laws had been made; yet when they are made, it is ſome matter that they be kept; then it is that the Conſcience is concern'd.

But becauſe the ignorant, and the ſtubborn, will yet pretend Conſcience againſt obedience, expreſly againſt the doctrine of the Text; and think their Reaſons to be ſufficient to bear them out; and therefore may be apt to clamour if their arguments cannot be heard, and fairly conſider'd; I muſt enter upon my ſecond task

task which will be to give you an account of ſome of thoſe things that are brought forth to deliver the Conſcience from the obligation that is upon it to humane Laws, together with what may be ſaid in anſwer to them; and then leave you to determine for or againſt Authority, as you ſhall ſee which balance has the moſt weight in it.

II. It is ſaid *firſt*, that God alone is to direct and govern the Conſcience, becauſe he onely can look into the mind, ſee into the faults and puniſh the prevarications. And therefore to inſtate humane Authority with this power (beſides the incompetency of giving Laws, where it cannot take notice of the tranſgreſſion) would be an uſurpation upon God's right, and an intrenching upon the Sovereignty of Heaven.

I anſwer; We do admit that God alone has the Royalty over Conſciences; but then it muſt be added, that God, by that power which he has over the Conſcience, does alſo bind it to the obſervation of humane Laws. For we do not pretend that the

the Laws of men bind it by their own ſtrength, but that it is bound to obey by the command of God. So that his Sovereignty is not in the leaſt diminiſh'd, but the more eſtabliſh'd, becauſe we ſay that humane Laws could have no obligation upon the Conſcience if it were not by God's appointment. Nor is it needfull as the objection does ſuppoſe, that the Sovereign power ſhould inſpect mens Conſciences, in order to their obligation, becauſe God who can ſearch into them has already bound them. The Prince gives but the matter, and the inſtances of obedience, God lays on the compulſion. And indeed the true ſtating of the queſtion would have been ſufficient to this objection; for though we affirm that humane Laws are tied upon the Conſcience, yet we do not ſay by humane power; the Conſcience is God's Servant, and he binds it. And this anſwers what St. *Paul* teaches in the Text, that *we muſt needs be ſubject, not onely for wrath, but alſo for Conſcience-ſake*; that is, for fear of God's diſpleaſure who has bound the Conſcience to obedience.

It

It is urged *ſecondly* that to allow humane Laws to oblige the Conſcience, is to give up the rights and liberties of Chriſtians into the diſpoſe of humourſome and tyrannical Princes; and contrary both to our prudence and duty; and therefore it is both folly and treachery to become the ſervants of men.

To this *I reply*, though this looks like a very pretty Argument, yet the whole thing is not at all to the purpoſe. For we are at no controverſie, whether it be not a part of Chriſtian liberty that the Conſcience be bound by none but God; that matter is readily yielded them; and we do acknowledge that when humane Laws are made, if it was not for the will of God commanding our obedience, the Conſcience was purely at liberty. But then it is to be added, that whenever Laws are made, a neceſſity then is introduc'd upon the Conſcience; becauſe God who is the Lord of it has ſubjected it, when he ſaid, *obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake.* Nay and St. *Peter* who underſtood well enough how far we might appeal to Chriſtian liberty againſt obedience

obedience expreſly tells us, that we muſt not pretend it upon the baſer deſign of carrying on *Sedition*, or *Schiſm*, or *Rebellion* by it.

1 *Pet.* 2. 15.

And therefore it is by no means to be indur'd, that Chriſtian liberty ſhould be ſet up to deſtroy Chriſtian Kings, and the freedoms of Conſcience run out to licentiouſneſs of practice; and becauſe our Conſciences are not the ſervants of the Prince, therefore we our ſelves neither will become his ſubjects. Our minds are free, therefore our mouths, and pens, and actions muſt be ſo too; as if Chriſtian, and Libertine, were terms equivalent, and Chriſtian immunity were a toleration to deſtroy all civility, and government, and peace, and humanity. But is there no way for Chriſtians to maintain their liberty but by entring upon the rights and prerogatives of Kings? And is Chriſtian liberty ſo much altogether within the incloſure of the Subject, that the Prince has not alſo his ſhare in it? Or muſt the free-born Subject break in upon the Birth-rights and Liberties of the Crown, and reduce it to ſubmiſſion and ſlavery, that

that the humoursome Christian may enjoy what he is pleas'd to call his Christian liberty? *Christ* gave not his bloud for this end, nor did he make a purchase of a disobedient, and gain-saying people; and as He himself set up no pretences from God against the Rights of *Cæsar*, but determined to each their proportions of Justice, and Obedience; so he intended by his Death, and Doctrines, Precepts and Examples, to render Christians meek, and humble, dutifull and submissive; and be confident no man can be God's servant, unless he be also a good Subject.

There is one pretence yet behind, that has in it a great deal of clamour, and does most of all cosen our peope; and that is this. When the Magistrate, or the Ministers of Religion call upon them to obey the Laws, why God forbid but they should; they are as ready as any to doe that, so far as they are good, and just, and agreeable to the word of God. But what if they be against the word of God? what then? why then, no man calls upon them to obey. For in this we all agree in one Resolution, that God is to be obey'd, and not man. But

then as this caſe is handled, all our diſobedient people get out at this door: for the whole Rout of Diſſenters, all of them with one mouth declare againſt our Laws, that they are not agreeable to the Word of God. And this is their ſtaple objection, by which the trade of Faction is driven, and their Parties are kept up, and their diſobedience is defended, and they reckon themſelves then beſt of all to follow their conſciences, when they moſt of all break the Laws.

It is methinks *firſt* of all a little odd, that theſe people of ſuch different perſuaſions, as to moſt things elſe, ſhould have their Conſciences ſo exactly ſet to oppoſe the Government. To an indifferent man therefore, who hears the out-cryes, and ſees the united endeavours both of the *Papiſt*, and *Diſſenter*, to deſtroy our Church, it looks more like a Confederacy, than a ſcruple. But if it be, as they pretend, a diſſatisfaction of mind; it is yet to be conſider'd, That all theſe Parties do admit, that indeed they are to obey the Laws for Conſcience-ſake, unleſs the Law it ſelf be againſt the Conſcience, as that is inſtructed by the Word of God. Now here are *two things*

to

to be done. To underſtand *firſt* of all, what Conſcience truly is, and not run themſelves out of breath, and the Laws out of countenance, with words and tricks. The *ſecond* thing ſhould be to produce plain, and evident Texts of Scripture, to which our Laws are contrary. Our duty that is made eaſie and familiar, and nothing can be ſaid with more authority, or plainneſs, than what St. *Paul* has taught in the 13*th* of the *Romans* to eſtabliſh our Duty: but diſobedience is wrapt up in notions, and noiſe, and amuſements; for the Teachers are afraid they ſhall loſe their Herds, and therefore they keep up Conſcience in a continual Ferment; for if they once depart from that word, a fair way is made for Obedience, and the *Dagon* of the Separation is fallen, and the craft by which they get their wealth is diſcover'd; for they know too well, that the ſame ſtrings do both open, and tye up, mens Conſciences, and their Purſes.

But the People are all this while abuſed; and the whole thing is a queſtion of Dominion, Whether the Laws or theſe Preachers muſt govern the Conſcience;

and the quarrel is not ſo much between Conformity and Conſcience, as between their Leaders, and the Government. And yet if the pretence be Conſcience, we ſhould doe well to give over our Revilings, and ſuppoſe at leaſt thus far in favour of the Magiſtrate. That he may think his Conſcience as rightly inſtructed to require obedience, as they think their Conſciences directed to diſobey. Certainly the Prince muſt have as much Right to uſe his own meaſures in preſcribing to the Conſcience of his Subjects, as to practice, as they can have to ſet up their practices againſt the Law; and no Magiſtrate can with ſafety, or ſatisfaction, guide his own mind, that ſhall compoſe his Laws to fit only with other mens. And if the humour of any one Party ſhall be a licenſe for their diſobedience, all diſagreeing Perſuaſions will put in for the ſame Privilege; and ſo the Magiſtrate ſhall make Laws to be obey'd by who will, and he muſt alter his Determinations, as oft as a new Conſcience ſhall be ſtarted.

Some men are of ſhort underſtandings, and others lye under great prejudices, they

they have weak heads, and ſtrong necks, and ſome play upon you with the word Conſcience, but deſign, and intereſt, are under the diſguiſe. Now if the Magiſtrate's conſcience muſt be condemn'd to obſerve all the humours of hot and craſy heads, you may as well make him the Maſter of the *Hoſpitals* and the *Bedlam*; and bid him let all his people run to leproſie and madneſs, without controul, or cure. And for the other, the deſigning, and intriguing conſcience; if the Prince muſt not moleſt that, he delivers up his people to craft and violence; and ſuch men as have no conſciences of their own, ſhall ruine a State and Church, by working upon other mens. And therefore it is better that the Magiſtrate keep his own conſcience, and look to the Government; for certainly mens perſuaſions are not to be let alone, to doe miſchief, and deſtroy the peace. And if they will injoy their conſciences, let them doe it without calling the people into Conventicles, and making ſeditious Orations, to bring the Laws into contempt, and the people into ſuſpicions, to trouble mens minds,

to

to diſhonour the Wiſedom of *Parliaments*, and deſtroy both our quiet, and our obedience. Some mens opinions, and other mens intereſt, is the conſcience they ſo much talk of; and then it is no wonder at all, they cannot for their hearts obey, when they themſelves are ſetting up for ſuperiority. But to thoſe, *laſtly*, that are ſeduced, the Magiſtrate would be patient, and the Laws tender, ſuppoſing that they remain at home, and are humble, and willing to be inſtructed; but if they will remain ignorant, and ſtubborn, the Laws are not to be ſuſpended, becauſe ſome men want wit, and others modeſty, and will think as they liſt, and do as they pleaſe. The Prince muſt not be Lord over our minds, but I hope he may reſtrain our actions, nay, though they have upon them the pretence of *Religion*; for we have known heretofore what practices have aſſum'd to themſelves the title of *God's Cauſe*. Theſe, I hope, are not to be uſed with the ſame tenderneſs and caution. This puts me upon the *third* and *laſt* Particular of my Text.

III. To

III. To conſider *how far tenderneſs of Conſcience ought to be admitted.* There are a ſort of people that have no great matter to ſay againſt the Laws, but they have a great many ſcruples againſt Obedience. Theſe are ſuch as are pleas'd to give themſelves the Character of men of tender minds. To theſe people, I ſhall only ſay, that, *firſt*, if tenderneſs of mind does proceed from not underſtanding the true nature, or juſt limits, and adequate rules of Conſcience, then theſe ſort of men are to look upon the Laws as their beſt Guide, and Chriſtian Princes as their faireſt Inſtructors; Children are not to chooſe their duty, but to obey their Parents; and of all things in the world, ignorant people are not to be left to themſelves, not to ſet up ſcruples againſt Obedience, but taught what they are to doe, and kept out of harms way.

But in the *ſecond place*, if tenderneſs of mind does proceed from the ill diſpoſition of it, and men cannot reconcile their duty, with their intereſt; why then indeed, our State-Phyſicians muſt cure it,

it, as they can, by gentle Application, or ſeverer Remedies, as the diſtemper is not ſo hurtfull, or as it is ulcerous, and inveterate. But ſome mens tenderneſs is ſhrewdly to be ſuſpected, when it ſhall be conſider'd; that moſt of thoſe things for which they ſo earneſtly contend againſt the Laws, do evidently ſerve the ends of money and ambition, and have greater deſigns upon riches and power, than heaven, or the ſouls of their Proſelytes.

And let the indifferent and unconcern'd part of the world determine, when men ſhall cry out tenderneſs of mind againſt the Prince's Laws, and have no tenderneſs at all for his Perſon; when they ſhall ſcruple his Commands, but make no ſcruple to invade his Rights; when they themſelves cannot kneel at the Communion, and yet ſhall make their King kneel to a Block; when they ſhall indeavour to ſet up *Chriſt*'s Kingdom, only as a pretence to pull down *Cæſar*'s, and make way for their unlimited Uſurpations; when it ſhall be no Treaſon to fight againſt the King, nor no Sacrilege

to

to make themſelves rich with Church-Plate, and Church-Revenues; every man in theſe caſes, can ſee with half an eye, that tenderneſs of mind can have no good meaning, and the Laws muſt not be over-born by ſuch men of craft and violence.

And in fine; becauſe on all hands it is agreed that true tenderneſs of mind does conſiſt in two things. To ſcruple the leaſt ſin, and not to give the leaſt offence; It ſhould be conſider'd in the *firſt place*, that we have no law, in the obedience to which, we can be ſaid to tranſgreſs any Divine appointment; and therefore it muſt not be ſaid, that any man diſobeys out of tenderneſs of conſcience, unleſs the thing commanded were contrary to Divine inſtitution. And *ſecondly*; ſince tenderneſs of mind does conſiſt in being wary of giving the leaſt offence, certainly in this affair our Governours are much concern'd; and our tender men might conſider, that it is no ſmall ſcandal to bring the Laws into contempt, and by *Petitions* and *Appeals*, by Stories and

Pamphlets, by private *Whiſpers*, and publick *Calumnies*, to repreſent the King, commanding unequal and unneceſſary things.

And ſince as the caſe is handled, a ſcandal muſt light ſomewhere, either upon our wiſe Governours, or our miſ-lead People; the modeſt and the humble will preſume for the Laws, and take care for their Duty; and not comply with thoſe that are train'd up under oppoſition, and hatred, to all that are above them.

And the truth is, theſe tender men are ſo much the worſe to be lik'd, becauſe ſome of their own principles, I might ſay, ſome of their very ſelves, notwithſtanding their tenderneſs of Conſcience, in ſome diſputable Points, relating to Ceremonies and Modes of worſhip; did yet commit ſuch horrid things both againſt divine, and humane Laws, that no Age, nor no People, though the moſt ſavage, can produce the like. But ſtill if you will not admit of theſe mens motions for Reformation; nor hear their pleas for Peace; nor tolerate their Separation; nor

ſuffer

ſuffer them to muſter in their Conventicles, till by a *Curſe ye Meroz*, they have form'd their followers to give Battel to the wicked; why then good men! preſently their Conſciences are troubled, and a great Affliction is upon their minds; for the Laws ſit very uneaſie upon thoſe mens ſhoulders, where ſtubbornneſs and intereſt do influence the diſobedience.

I have done with the Text; I ſhall only beg your Patience, to *apply* it to this *Day*, and this *Aſſembly*.

1. Since God has bound Obedience upon us by his expreſs command, let us as St. *Peter* directs us, *obey every Ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake.* Let us not turn our Religion into Diſputations, and ſeek out Arguments againſt our Duty, nor find out excuſes to cover our evil Purpoſes. Obedience would be a very eaſie performance to a Chriſtian, if he did not intangle himſelf with niceties, and ſcruples; but it would agree 1 *Pet.* 2. 13.

better with our Name and Profeſſion, to be humble and modeſt, diſpute leſs, and obey more. For Obedience is a part of our Religion, if we may believe the Text; but it is a moſt unworthy thing, and the moſt abominable Hypocriſie to ſet up Religion againſt Obedience, and bring forth Conſcience againſt our duty; which if we have any conſcience, we are bound to perform.

2. Becauſe we are under Government, and in ſociety with our Prince, and one another; therefore we are to conſider the honour and benefit of the Publick; to lay aſide our Factions, and private Intereſts, and make the ſame Laws our common meaſures, becauſe they equally defend all our Lives, and eſtabliſh our Eſtates, and preſerve our Peace, ſettle our Properties, and maintain our Religion; and do as much confirm our *own Liberties*, as the *King's Prerogatives.*

3. Since God has oblig'd the Conſcience to obey the Laws, becauſe the Prince is his Miniſter; we are to conſider Magiſtrates under that ſacred Character, which God

God has given then, when he said, *they are God's.* They are his Vicegerents, and we must receive their commands, with the same readiness and purposes of obedience. And though we may think some things which they prescribe, are not necessary; yet obedience is; and it is not so much the excellency of the thing, as the Authority which commands, that we are to consider. And be confident there is no *Church*, nor *Nation* in the world, but contentious men may quarrel their Constitutions. But what then? must the peevish Subject be tolerated in every thing he is pleas'd to find fault with? then all Governments are precarious, and at the will of the People; and if the Prince will take Objections instead of Obedience, and ease his People in all those things against which they can find an argument, he may easily conclude by what has been, what will be again; Remit to them but one Law or two, and they will make a Breach upon all the rest. It is better therefore that the Subject be taught to study their troublesome Opinions less, and Ps. 82. 6.

and Obedience more, not ſo much to keep up Parties, and promote ſtrifes, as Peace and Unity, Charity and Obedience.

4. I ſhall not be ſo vain to offer any Advice to my *Lords*, the *Judges*: They themſelves know very well, that to prevent farther Schiſm in the *Church*, and Sedition in the *State*, we muſt bring all our trifling contentions, and religious quarrels, to be determined by the *Law*. For, for ought that I can ſee, men will wrangle perpetually, and they will be always confident; and every man will think it hard to lay down his Opinions at the King's feet; but therefore they muſt be brought to lay down their practices, as he ſhall require them. For we are all agreed, that *Kings* and *Parliaments*, can make what Laws they think beſt; and when the Prince, either by Them, or by his Judges, has declar'd his will by the Law, or his meaning in it, here one would think it neceſſary that all Peoples hands, and tongues ſhould be tyed up, that they neither

ſpeak,

ſpeak, nor doe evil to the Law. And if any man ſhall object, that the Government has not obſerv'd right, and juſt meaſures in its Conſtitutions; beſides, that this cenſure does ariſe from Pride, and will go forth into Faction; My *Lords the Judges*, I hope, will quaſh the *Inditement*, and give ſentence for the *King*. For He can have no ends, but thoſe of Peace, and Religion; He has the Advantages of his own Prudence, and the wiſeſt Deliberations; He proceeds according to the former Laws, and the ſame Scriptures, and unites to his own, the Wiſedom of the Nation. And, after all this, muſt private mens Opinions, conteſt with publick Reſolutions? and the men of deſign be endur'd to bring the Laws into contempt, and the Nation into diſturbance, to deſpiſe Dominions, and ſpeak evil of the Prince? This is no way of Peace, nor Sobriety; nor can ever ſettle us: nothing can doe that, but Obedience.

And

And therefore I hope my *Lords*, *the Judges*, will bring all our People to the *Laws*, and a Conformity to the *Eſtabliſh'd Religion*; that ſhall confirm our quiet, and our tranquillity; for no men give diſturbance to the State, but ſuch as depart from our Church. For as it is Religion that muſt make our Nation great and proſperous, ſo it is the trueſt Intereſt of it, to keep our People to an Union in it: conſidering how ſeverely we have ſmarted under the Factions, and Hypocriſies of thoſe men, that were the Cauſers of our Diviſions. And Separation is therefore the more intolerable, becauſe Religious Opinions, and Practices contrary to the Law, have not only an influence upon the mind; but the Preachers alſo can lead their Proſelytes, to what place, or againſt whom they pleaſe; for whoever is a *Guide to Conſciences*, may be a *Captain of their Marches*. That no man then be ſuffer'd to put an Affront upon the Law, nor ſpeak irreverently of the Prince; for the Laws are the ſecurity of our peace, and our pro-

proſperity: and the King is the Repreſentative of God's Power and Majeſty; to ſpeak evil of him, is to blaſpheme Heaven. We have the beſt Prince, and the beſt Laws; and both are to be defended from the evil, and ingratefull treatments of malicious Adverſaries.

And that we may at laſt be quiet; Conſcience is not to be ſuffer'd to be made a Diſguiſe for the baſeſt Purpoſes; nor thoſe men to appropriate to themſelves the Appellation of tender minds, who will ſtick at no miſchief, when they can doe it with impunity, and with proſperous Advantages.

But of all theſe things, my *Lords the Judges* will take care; that the Majeſty of the Prince be not leſſen'd, nor the Laws baffled, nor our Peace diſturb'd; but that we may obey, and *pray for our King, and all that are in Authority under him, that we may lead a quiet and happy life, in all Godlineſs, and Honeſty.* Amen. 1 *Tim.* 2. 1, 2.

Grant, Lord, we beseech thee, that the course of this World may be so peaceably ordered by thy Governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all Godly quietness, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

FINIS.

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